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Chairman: Mr. Maitland ..... (South Africa)

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The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Agenda item 76: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/57/13, A/57/282, A/57/294, A/57/338, A/57/455, A/57/456, A/57/462)

1. **Ms. Costa** (United States) said that the United States was profoundly concerned about Palestine refugees' humanitarian needs that were being served by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

2. The contribution made by the United States in 2002 to the UNRWA budget¼almost US$ 120 million, of which $ 30 million had been earmarked for emergency UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza¾reflected the profound commitment of the United States to the well-being of the Palestine refugees. The United States had made the largest contributions both to UNRWA's regular budget and to its emergency appeals. During the past year, the Israelis and the Palestinians alike had suffered the effects of terrorism and deteriorating security. The situation had posed important challenges to UNRWA.

3. Even under the present difficult conditions, UNRWA must continue the process of management reforms. There was no doubt that UNRWA had already achieved some success in that regard. The United States felt that effective management reform should also involve measures geared to bolstering UNRWA's contacts with those interested in its activities. Strengthening such contacts could only improve the situation of the Palestine refugees.

4. The United States would support all the resolutions considered under this agenda item if the primary emphasis of their language would be on the humanitarian problems of the refugees and on UNRWA's assistance to them.

5. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that, although UNRWA had been created as a temporary institution for providing assistance to Palestine refugees, today, more than half a century later, the General Assembly had been forced to renew its mandate again, because of Israel's refusal to implement resolutions of international legitimacy requiring that the refugees be afforded the right to return to their homes.

6. Israel was not only causing enormous suffering to the millions of Palestine refugees that it had expelled from their land, but was also intentionally depriving them of an income-generating capacity, which is a violation of basic human rights. There had been assaults on Agency staff, as well as on refugee camps. Refugee camps and Agency facilities had been destroyed. Agency-built schools had been used as prisons. Restrictions had been imposed on the movement of Agency personnel. Furthermore, Israel had not paid what it owed UNRWA. Based on that, Lebanon was appealing to the international community to continue to exert pressure on Israel to refrain from imposing restrictions on Agency staff and destroying Agency facilities. Israel was obliged to pay the Agency all that was owed and to comply with the provisions of relevant international agreements.

7. The refugee problem was one of the primary features of the Palestinian problem, particularly for Lebanon, where some 387,000 Palestinians lived, accounting for 10 percent of the country's total population.

8. Lebanon's position on the problem of the Palestine refugees was rooted in resolutions of international legitimacy, and that position was reflected in the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at an ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the Summit Level. The right of the refugees to return to their homes and property had to be enforced. Lebanon rejected any form of permanent settlement of the refugees in its territory, because that would contravene the provisions of the country's constitution. In addition, from a geographic, demographic, and economic standpoint, the number of Palestine refugees exceeded Lebanon's capacity to absorb them; moreover, the Palestine refugees did not want live in the camps permanently and insisted on their right of return, their right to self-determination, and their right to create their own independent State.

9. Lebanon again declared the importance of the Agency continuing its work to register refugees and keep track of them and issue identification cards that would enable them to maintain their status as refugees and Palestinian citizens.

10. In conclusion, the Lebanon delegation again declared that the only way to solve the refugee problem would be to eliminate the underlying causes, chief

among which was the occupation. In that connection, the international community should obligate Israel to choose peace and recognize all the resolutions of international legitimacy, withdraw its troops from all the occupied Arab territories, create the conditions necessary for the return of the refugees, and guarantee the Palestinians the exercise of their rights to self-determination and the creation of their own independent State.

11. **Mr. Takahashi** (Japan) said that Japan attached great significance to the activities of UNRWA, which was the principal international organization providing humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees and thereby contributing considerably to regional stability.

12. Japan was deeply concerned over the difficulties and hardships experienced by the refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. UNRWA personnel were also facing increasing difficulties and problems such as the difficulty associated with obtaining access to those in need and coordinating Agency activities with those of other organizations providing humanitarian assistance on the ground.

13. The Government of Japan again appealed to the Israelis and the Palestinians to break the continuing cycle of violence. In particular, it called on Israel to exercise maximum self-restraint in the use of force, and on the Palestinian Authority to do its utmost to suppress extremist acts.

14. The question of stability in the Middle East as a whole was vitally important to Japan. Japan's recent focus had been on assisting the reform the Palestinian Authority, which was of vital importance to the long-term consolidation of peace and prevention of conflicts. Japan was prepared to cooperate with the parties, as well as with other members of the international community, to implement the vision of the two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure, recognized borders, as envisioned in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

15. Japan was determined to continue to provide maximum support to the Palestine refugees, and it hoped that the Agency would continue its efforts to perform its work efficiently and effectively.

16. **Mr. Kasoulides** (Cyprus) said that Cyprus appreciated the work of UNRWA, which, under adverse conditions, had continued to implement its programmes in education, health care, and the provision of relief and social services for more than 4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and the Syrian Arab Republic and in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as had taken measures to reduce the suffering caused by hostilities, closures, restrictions, and harsh security measures.

17. Maintaining close, friendly ties with its Middle Eastern neighbors, Cyprus sincerely hoped for lasting peace and security in the Middle East and was firmly convinced that the backbone of the economic and social structure had to be preserved for the Palestinian people. As for UNRWA's activities, Cyprus was deeply concerned about the financial difficulties faced by the Agency in carrying out its programmes and meeting the minimum needs of the refugees.

18. Cyprus firmly believed that work towards peace would be resumed and that history would not repeat itself. UNRWA's role today was even more crucial. Agency operations should be a secure financial footing, and Cyprus was joining the appeals for additional and increased contributions to assist the Agency in resolving the current situation and to help millions of suffering Palestinians. Cyprus had joined the appeals for additional and increased contributions as a result of the recent crisis, and it was prepared as before to implement its own private relief plan, which included technical assistance programmes and training for Palestinian officials and civil servants in Cyprus as soon as the situation returned to normalcy.

19. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia), referring to the suffering of the Palestine refugees, noted that more than 250 West Bank villages were not linked to the general water distribution network and experienced water shortages on a regular basis, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. To offset that problem, they collected water during the winter from their roofs and stored it in underground tanks. During the summer, the water ran out, and more had to be brought in by tanker trucks. That system worked relatively well, but with the frequent closures, which cut many villages off from the outside, and the prolonged curfews and restrictions placed on the movement of people and vehicles, a serious water shortage was looming. The actions of the Israeli forces, which were disrupting UNRWA work to provide Palestinians with needed services, including the provision of water, were aggravating the situation. The Agency was unable to deliver humanitarian supplies to its distribution centres, and Agency facilities such as

schools, training centres, and medical facilities had been destroyed by Israeli forces. In that connection, UNRWA and all States Members of the United Nations should ensure that the Agency could perform its functions unhampered, and Zambia called on the Government of Israel to stop destroying UNRWA facilities and disrupting its operations.

20. The encouraging developments with respect to UNRWA's regular cash budget of should be noted. At the same time, according to the Commissioner-General's report (A/57/13), donor pledges to the Agency's 2002 budget left a gap of $ 37.9 million, and Zambia supported the Commissioner-General's appeal for additional pledges to cover that deficit. In that connection, the Zambian delegation wanted to express its appreciation to the governments of the countries listed in table 10 of the report and to the European Community for the contributions they made, as well as to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States, and the European Community, whose combined contribution amounted to more than half of the contributions for the current year. Furthermore, the responsibility for supporting UNRWA's work was borne by all countries, and Zambia strongly appealed to States Members in a position to do so contribute generously. In addition, it called upon the States of the Middle East to demonstrate their political commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people in practical terms. The Zambian delegation believed that raising their combined contributions to half the UNRWA budget would not only be of great political significance, but would also greatly improve the Agency's financial situation.

21. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh) said that the Commissioner-General's report had provided information on Agency activities and on important Agency achievements. Given the current situation of continuing violence and violation of the norms of international law, those achievements deserved wholehearted approval. At the same time, the Agency had to cope with numerous and varied problems in performing its mandated tasks. The report clearly said that those problems were the result of Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territory and the violence used by the Israeli armed forces. The continuing interference of Israeli forces in UNRWA's activities had taken on new forms. They were taking over schools and using them as detention centres, preventing ambulances from moving patients, and killing UNRWA staff members, as well as damaging Agency infrastructure and restricting the movement of its staff members and materials.

22. Those and many other acts referred to in the report pointed to a calculated effort to politicize and belittle the role of an organization that was performing a noble humanitarian function. The international community should condemn such practices, and Bangladesh called on Israel to put an immediate halt to those of its actions that contravened the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, and the 1967 agreement between the Government of Israel and the Agency.

23. In addition to an increase in the number of refugees, the Agency was faced with a number of problems that had strained the Agency's capacity to provide services. Palestinian job losses, the deterioration of the economy, the costs of repairing Agency infrastructure, and, above all, the slow response to Agency appeals for its emergency assistance programme in 2002 were also among the factors that were making UNRWA's work more difficult.

24. Despite that, the Agency had continued to perform its functions selflessly and use innovative approaches. In that connection, the speaker wanted to make several specific points. First, in education, the performance of UNRWA schools was praiseworthy, despite the suspension of the educational process as a result of military operations. A programme had been developed to make up for lost time, and an educational project promoting tolerance and nonviolent means of conflict resolution had gotten under way. Second, a microfinance and microenterprise programme, which was an effective means of expanding opportunities for the populace, especially women, had been implemented. Third, faced with restrictions imposed on the movement of people and humanitarian cargoes, the Agency had implemented the operations support officer programme in the West Bank, which helped ensure the movement of UNRWA staff and vehicles. Fourth, the speaker felt it appropriate to mention the Agency's cooperation with other United Nations agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund in areas such as health care and education. In working with those agencies, as well as with the United Nations Development Programme,

the Agency had managed to meet the immediate medical and health needs of the inhabitants of areas that had suffered as a result of the actions of Israeli forces.

25. At the same time, financial difficulties and the disruption of the peace process seemed to be requiring that the Agency adopt different strategies. UNRWA, for example, was working ever more vigorously to create local capabilities, expand opportunities for the refugees by providing microcredit, and make community-based organizations more responsible for providing social services.

26. Bangladesh felt that the assistance provided by the Agency was helping to strengthen the morale of the Palestinians, and the Agency needed all the support available in this difficult time. While commending the donor countries, Bangladesh also felt it should note that solving the problem of the shortage of funds in the regular budget required that additional resources be provided and that UNRWA's appeals for emergency assistance be responded to.

27. **Mr. Maso** (South Africa) commended the Commissioner-General and his staff for the work they were doing under extremely difficult conditions that involved a dramatic worsening of the political, social, humanitarian, and economic situation in the occupied territories and said that his country was seriously concerned about the effects of the curfews and closures on the economic conditions in the occupied territories, especially the increase of unemployment and poverty to unacceptable levels. Also distressing were the reports of the dramatic deterioration of the provision of medical services to the Palestinians, which was largely due to the closures and curfews, which were hampering the provision of medical and health services and were precipitating a rapid worsening of the situation involving water supply and sanitation. The results of a recent WHO survey, for example, indicated that almost half of young children and women of child-bearing age suffered from anemia and that malnourishment among children had increased markedly.

28. Under those conditions, the services provided by the Agency to the Palestinian population were becoming vitally important, in connection with which South Africa condemned those of Israel's practices that were hampering the movement of UNRWA staff and materials, as well as the destruction of Agency infrastructure and facilities and their use as detention centres. South Africa called upon Israel to fulfill its obligations under international law, particularly the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946 and the bilateral agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Israel.

29. The South African delegation was also concerned about the Agency's financial predicament and firmly supported the Commissioner-General's appeal to major donors to work to assist UNRWA in meeting its vital needs.

30. In July 2002, the Government of South Africa had facilitated the delivery of medical supplies to Palestinians. Humanitarian goods were collected by South African civil society groups as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people, who were suffering immensely under the military occupation of their land.

31. The crisis would ultimately be resolved when Israel ended its occupation of the Palestinian territories and when the Palestinian people exercised their right to self-determination. In that connection, South Africa once again declared that it was in favor of creating an independent Palestinian State with its capital in Jerusalem and appealed to Israel to leave the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, dismantle the Israeli settlements, and effect a fair solution of the Palestine refugee problem in keeping with the 11 December 1948 General Assembly resolution 194 (III). South Africa believed that lasting peace, security, and stability could be achieved only through peaceful negotiation and the assurance of the inherent right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the creation of an independent State. The land for peace formula remained relevant, and implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 1397 (2002) was, as before, the only basis for achieving a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

32. In conclusion, the speaker noted that the closure of areas, the blockade, and the restrictions on the movement of goods, people, and resources were acts of collective punishment prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the international community must ensure compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population under the current conditions.

33. **Mr. Al-Shamlan** (Kuwait) made special note of the urgency of the question of the Palestine refugees

and the duty of the international community to provide them assistance until the question was fully resolved. The Kuwait delegation expressed the hope that UNRWA's work would continue and would expand in all five areas of its operations despite the Agency's financial predicament.

34. Kuwait firmly intended to continue to provide economic assistance to Palestine refugees and would earmark $ 1.5 million for funding measures to preserve Arab and Islamic culture in Jerusalem, as well as for providing material support to families of Palestinian martyrs. In addition, Kuwait would pay its contribution to the UNRWA budget. The harsh measures undertaken by Israel since September 2000, which it justified with considerations of national security, were causing the Palestinian people to suffer and were hindering the work of UNRWA.

35. Kuwait declared its complete solidarity with the Palestinian people and called upon Israel to abide by the framework of the peace process defined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the land for peace formula. Regarding an overall settlement, the recent peace initiative put forth at the meeting of the heads of state and government of the Arab countries was a new approach to finding a just, long-term solution that would ensure the rights of both parties.

36. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the UNRWA Commissioner-General's report had given an idea of the gravity of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the difficulties UNRWA had to face when fulfilling the lofty task assigned it. UNRWA's advisory committee had been forced to express its concern over the fact that Israeli practices had engendered a severe humanitarian crisis that manifested itself in the growth of poverty, the deterioration of health, and an increase in the number of children suffering from malnutrition. As for the activities of the Agency itself, he noted cases in which Agency facilities had been destroyed, especially in the Jenin refugee camp.

37. The Working Group on the Financing of the Agency had expressed concern over the negative effects that measures to solve the problem of the chronic shortage of funds had had on humanitarian operations. Also of concern was the less-than-prompt response of the international community to appeals to replenish the Agency budget.

38. Although the Palestine refugee problem was humanitarian in nature, the problem was essentially political, because some parties had refused to comply with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Consequently, UNRWA had become a permanent and indispensable and would remain as such until the Palestine refugee problem was resolved in keeping with the norms of international law.

39. **Mr. Arrouchi** (Morocco) said that UNRWA was a symbol of the international community's commitment to solving the Palestine refugee problem. The Agency was in a difficult situation as a result of Israel's continuing military operations in Palestinian population centres and refugee camps. In that context, the first step of the international community must be to increase the financial resources available to the Agency, which would enable it to take measures to address the growing humanitarian crisis. Morocco called upon UNRWA to keep the donor community informed of its emergency assistance programmes.

40. In addition, the international community must exert pressure on Israel to lift the restrictions on UNRWA's activities and to begin to comply with norms of international law. While the socioeconomic conditions of the Palestine refugees and their housing conditions were deteriorating dramatically, the Israeli forces were purposely destroying UNRWA facilities. Moreover, Israel was arresting and torturing Agency staff. The work of the Agency should be regarded as an integral part of the settlement process in the Middle East, because concern for the Palestine refugees would serve as the foundation for activities after the crisis, which would enable Palestinian society to prepare itself for solving future problems.

41. The world community must adopt measures enabling UNRWA to continue its humanitarian mission without any obstacles until a comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestine refugee question is reached, including right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

42. **Ms. Price** (Canada) said that, with the situation in the Middle East deteriorating, the world community was obliged to take measures consistent with the overall goal of ensuring that the State of Israel and an independent, viable, democratic Palestine live side by side in peace and security. Based on that, Canada supported several initiatives aimed at strengthening trust between the parties and restoring their faith in the

political process. Canada had expressed its concern to Israeli authorities regarding the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and had constantly called upon Israel to fulfill its obligations under international law, including obligations emanating from the Fourth Geneva Convention.

43. At the same time, Canada condemned terrorist acts against the peaceful populace and called upon all Palestinians to stand against such violence.

44. In those exceptionally trying circumstances, UNRWA showed a devotion to the task for which it was created, providing vitally necessary emergency assistance and services in the most varied of fields. UNRWA played an important role in assisting the formation of a culture of peace in the region.

45. In the current year, Canada had contributed $ 10 million to UNRWA's main budget and had allocated $ 2 million in response to appeals for emergency assistance in Gaza and the West Bank. Canada firmly supported UNRWA's ongoing management reform process, acknowledging at same time the difficulty of the tasks the Agency faced.

46. After two years of bloody clashes, the parties must return to peace. The problems involved were clear, and the compromise solutions necessary for a just and lasting settlement were all still the same.

47. **Al-Harthy** (Saudi Arabia) noted that Israel was trying to solidify its position as an occupying Power, and that was reflected in its policy of repression, murder, closures, and demolition of homes, which was completely unacceptable to the international community. The plight of the population Occupied Palestinian Territory had become catastrophic, disease and poverty was ubiquitous, and people were consumed by fear as a result of Israel's practices there.

48. The tragic living conditions of the Palestinians had been reflected impartially in the UNRWA report presented by the Commissioner-General. The number of Palestine refugees was growing every year and, naturally, the extent of the needs that the Agency had to service was increasing. At the same time, the Agency's humanitarian work was being hampered by the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation forces in contempt of earlier concluded agreements.

49. Under those difficult and dangerous conditions, UNRWA staff members continued to carry out their noble mission, which deserved all available support. The financial predicament of UNRWA was a cause for serious concern, and for that reason the international community needed to responsibly approach the fulfillment of its obligations to ensure the functioning of the Agency.

50. Saudi Arabia continued to make its financial contributions and donations for the Palestine refugees and provide other assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. Since 1957, Saudi Arabia had donated some $ 62.8 million to UNRWA, not counting the $ 1.2 million it had sent to the Agency budget as its annual contribution. Saudi Arabia had provided the Agency a gratis subsidy of $ 34 million for purposes of implementing development projects. In conclusion, Saudi Arabia expressed confidence that UNRWA would be successful in continuing to provide assistance to Palestine refugees.

51. **Mr. Al-Athba** (Qatar) expressed appreciation to the Commissioner-General and his staff for the work they were doing under extremely dangerous conditions that involved closures and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, all of which resulted in the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestine refugees. Phenomena such as extreme poverty, elevated unemployment, and cutbacks of education and health-care programmes had become widespread.

52. The General Assembly at the current session continued to consider the question of the Middle East situation. That was occurring at a time when Israeli tanks were besieging Palestinian population centres, and Israeli aircraft were conducting strikes against the civilian population. It should be noted with concern that States were crying out in protection of human rights and the rights of refugees during those discussions, calling upon the international community to provide them with proper living conditions. But those voices were quiet when the topic was the problem of the Palestine refugees, as if those refugees had come from another planet. Many delegations paid lip service to the protection of human rights, but turned a blind eye to the actions of Israel, which was openly violating those rights and was completely ignoring the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international humanitarian law.

53. Qatar strongly condemned Israel's violation of its obligations under those principles and the agreement

reached with UNRWA in 1967. The international community must demand that Israel fulfill those obligations, and in that connection, Qatar welcomed the steps taken by the Agency to alleviate the suffering that the Palestinian people were experiencing as a result of the blockade of the West Bank and Gaza by the occupying Power. Qatar also called upon the international community, especially donor countries, to provide assistance to mitigate the effects of that blockade, make generous contributions toward funding UNRWA programmes, and respond to the appeals of the Agency for emergency assistance.

54. UNRWA was established in 1949 as a temporary agency for providing assistance to Palestine refugees. Despite the fact that more than half a century has gone by since then, the General Assembly has been forced to extend the Agency's mandate, because Israel continued to prevent the repatriation of the Palestine refugees. The refugees have inherent rights confirmed in General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and in all subsequent such resolutions. Chief among those rights is the right to return to their homes or to receive compensation, and any measures aimed at achieving a just and lasting solution of that problem must be based on the provisions of those resolutions.

55. Since reaching a comprehensive settlement of the crisis in the Middle East is impossible with the continuing occupation, the international community must acknowledge the importance of the services provided by the Agency to the Palestinian people in various fields. Donor countries should continue to make voluntary contributions to fund UNRWA's work so that the Agency could overcome the difficulties it was now facing, especially the serious financial difficulties. Effective measures to improve its financial situation would have a favorable effect not only on humanitarian activities in the interests of the Palestinian people, but also on overall stability in the Middle East. In that connection, it should be noted that, until a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III) is achieved, UNRWA must continue to carry out its mandate, and for that purpose it must be allocated all necessary financial resources.

56. Qatar commended UNRWA and its staff, who, risking their lives, provided humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians who needed it the most. In that connection, the Qatar delegation wanted to point to the need for emergency measures to effect the removal of the restrictions placed on the movement of UNRWA staff and materials in keeping with the agreement between the government of Israel and the Agency and with the principles of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

57. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) noted that the preceding speakers had clearly defined the many bloody problems in the region served by UNRWA, touching upon, in particular, questions pertaining to settlements, curfews, closures, assassinations, and suicide bombings. The Holy See understood that the current situation had a pernicious effect on the lives of a large number of people. In its work, the Pontifical Mission for Palestine relied heavily on interaction with its many partners who were providing it financial support for assisting the Palestinian people, especially those living in refugee camps. The funds of its annual budget of $ 10,720,000 were being earmarked for projects in such areas as employment, village restoration, and education and health care.

58. In his sermon on the Annunciation, read on Sunday, 11 August 2002, Pope John Paul II emphasized the hopelessness of violence as a means for solving the Israeli-Palestinian problem. No one could remain indifferent in the face of the mounting humanitarian tragedy. The international community must help the Palestinians and Israelis understand that the injustice that underlay the conflict and was the cause of the unending exchange of retaliations must come to an end. The findings of the Mitchell report of 6 May 2001 clearly indicated that the root cause of the suffering both of the Israelis and the Palestinians was Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands. The international community was obliged to help to ensure that both parties took the path of sincere negotiations, because the massive use of violence had produced nothing and only exacerbated the suffering of the Israelis and the Palestinians. It made sense to once again recall the public appeal for reconciliation made by the late Israeli prime minister, Itzhak Rabin, in 1993.

59. The delegation of the Holy See hoped that any solution of the multifaceted problems of the region would take into account the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem. The Holy See once again repeated its regular call for the adoption of internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion

and freedom of conscience of the city's residents to safeguard the special character of that city and the sites sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The current wave of violence was preventing pilgrimages to the Holy Land and was depriving local believers of access to their places of worship. The delegation of the Holy See called for strengthening international solidarity and the political will to eliminate the root cause of the violence, which was bringing suffering primarily to the civilian population and children.

60. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference) summarized the findings of the Commissioner-General's report on the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of the massive military operations conducted by the Israeli occupation forces. The measures used by the Israeli government were not only worsening the crisis in the Palestinian economy, but were also hampering UNRWA activities. Those and other of Israel's practices were at variance with the principles of international law and numerous international agreements. Moreover, according to some reports, the Government of Israel was trying to exert pressure on several large donor countries to abandon financial support of UNRWA.

61. It was regrettable that the international community, particularly the Security Council, had failed not only to persuade Israel to lift the restrictions on the movement of Agency staff and materials, unblock closed areas, and lift the curfew on Palestinians, but also to provide protection for the Palestinians against the continuing Israeli aggression. Given the vitally important role of the Agency in providing essential services to Palestine refugees and alleviating their suffering, the international community should increase its contributions to the Agency budget so that the Agency could continue to implement its programmes and provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people.

62. The summit-level Islamic Conference, as well as the conferences of Islamic States at the ministerial level, affirmed that the Palestinian population, wherever it might be, would remain within the sphere of responsibility of UNRWA until the refugee problem was resolved on the basis of the refugees' right to return to their homeland. As long as Israel continued its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and its aggression against the Palestinian people, the prospects for peace in the region would become increasingly remote.

63. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, according to the Israeli representative's statement, hundreds of thousands of Jews had allegedly been forced to flee countries in which they had lived for centuries. Such a claim had no basis whatsoever, since the facts indicate that the Jews who had left the Arab countries had done so voluntarily and of their own volition. In that context, it should be noted that Israel was vigorously working to encourage Jews living in other countries of the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, to return to Israel. Intensive work to that end was under way particularly in the Russian Federation, Belarus, Poland, and other countries.

64. Contrary to the assertion of Israel's representative, Lebanon welcomed the presence of numerous communities of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the country. The Jewish community had been officially recognized as one of the denominational groups in Lebanon and was participating in parliamentary elections, the most recent of which had been held in 2000. The problem at hand was not in the faith of the Jews, not in Judaism, but in Israel's occupation and position. Proof of that was the most recent summit of French-speaking countries, which was held in Lebanon in 2002 on the topic of the "Dialogue of Cultures."

65. The Israeli representative's remarks suggested that, rather than following the example of Israel and accepting and resettling the Palestinians in Arab countries, the Arab States were doing nothing to improve the plight of the refugees. Israel recognized every Jew as an Israeli, no matter where he was from. Arabs, however, acknowledged that Palestinians were Arabs, but first and foremost they were Palestinians. Consequently, they must return to their homeland in Palestine. The Israeli statements were insulting to all present, because all the General Assembly resolutions and the Committee resolutions since 1948 contained an appeal to Israel to allow the return of the refugees to their homeland.

66. Lebanon's position was well-known and had been set forth in the statements of the representatives of that country. It was based on General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 194 (III), and Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

67. Israel's representative seemed to have no sense of shame. Israel had expelled Palestinians from their homeland and was now crying crocodile tears about Arabs not making the required contributions towards funding the Agency. One needed only to turn to the UNRWA Commissioner-General's report to see that that was at odds with reality.

68. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Israeli representative's statement was replete with misleading assertions. Linking Palestinian refugee camps and the problem of terrorism, as the Israeli representative did, was ridiculous. The representative had tried to distort the facts and justify Israel's barbarous policy with references to the fight against terrorism and to self-defense. Before the formation of Israel, the region knew no terrorism. Occupation was just another name for terrorism. Resistance to occupation was a right secured in all international documents. The events occurring in the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and in Gaza were atrocious war crimes indicating that terrorism, destruction, and the extermination of people were integral components of Israeli policy.

69. Israel was trifling with the truth when it said that Arab States had expelled Jews from of its territory. Arabs and Jews had lived in peace and harmony for many centuries before the policy of Israel and its leaders forced many Jews to leave Arab countries voluntarily and of their own volition. The speaker was not surprised at Israel's accusations that the Syrian Arab Republic was not trying to provide assistance to Palestine refugees. Arabs had accepted their brothers - the Palestine refugees - lovingly and with care, but did not want the Palestine refugees to reside in their countries permanently, because that would enable Israeli settlers from other countries to take over the refugees' homes and property.

70. The hostile tone of the address of the Israeli representative was a reflection of the extremist position of the Israeli Government, which chose not to recognize the United Nations resolution or the norms of international law. Israel's intransigence was the reason that a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace had not yet been achieved in the Middle East. The speaker called upon Israel to do away with the policy of falsifying and distorting facts, recognize General Assembly resolution 194 (III), and put an end to the practices that ran counter to United Nations resolutions and the norms of international humanitarian law.

71. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was becoming increasingly difficult for UNRWA to work, because of the difficult circumstances in the area of operations as a result of Israel's practices as an occupying Power. Israel bore responsibility for the grave political and humanitarian situation in the final analysis. Palestine refugees faced the problem of hunger because Israel would not allow them to earn a living and was depriving them of access to food. It was destroying their homes and property and using heavy armaments and excessive force against refugee camps.

72. The main problem was that Israel was continuing to violate the norms of international and humanitarian law. The suicide bombings deserved condemnation, but were a result, not the cause, of occupation. Despite that, Israel would have the international community believe that it was not indifferent to the plight of the refugees and that it was cooperating with UNRWA and not hampering its work. UNRWA was a United Nations agency and was carrying out its mission in an exemplary manner, despite all the difficulties, which is why it must be afforded the same respect as other United Nations agencies and must not be slandered by Israel simply because it was providing assistance to a populace Israel found undesirable.

73. The plight of the Palestine refugees had remained unresolved now for more than 54 years because of Israel's intransigent position and its denial of the refugees' right of return to their homeland and their right of restitution of property or, for those who did not wish to return, to receive compensation. Israel's assertions that it had made a reasonable proposal to solve that problem were untenable because they did not met the minimum requirements for Israel's acceptance of responsibility for the situation at hand. Israel had asserted that it had an inherent right to live in a Jewish, democratic State. But did Israel thus have the right to deny such rights to the Palestine refugees? The Palestinians were ready for a peaceful settlement of the problem through negotiations, but that would require radical changes in the practices and policy of the occupying Power in the matter of returning to a negotiating table where all serious questions could be resolved. With regard to that, the rights of the Palestine refugees were clearly defined by international law, and that would have to serve as a starting point for any quest for a just and long-term solution through negotiations.

74. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel) said that all the speakers had refused to acknowledge that Israel's actions were not taking place in a vacuum. The Palestinian refugee problem had been spawned by violence and by the rejection of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and Israel's very right to exist by the Palestinians and the Arab States. Seeking to subvert that resolution by force of arms, seven Arab States had invaded Israel in a war that the then-Secretary-General called the "first armed aggression since the adoption of the United Nations Charter." As a result of the aggression, hundreds of thousands of people became refugees. Some of them were Palestine refugees, some of them were Jews expelled from the Arab countries where they had lived for hundreds of years.

75. More than 50 years later, Arab States were insisting that others bear the burden of that problem, despite the fact that, in historical and moral terms, it was their responsibility. Unlike Israel, the Arab States had kept the Palestinians in poverty and without rights. One of the delegates yesterday said that his government regarded the refugees "as if" they were citizens. Except in one Arab country, Palestine refugees were not issued passports, could not travel abroad, and could not apply for jobs or education. Why had they not given the Palestine refugees all the rights and privileges to which they were entitled under international norms and standards and not provided them with a decent life? The current discussion was further proof that political considerations were taking precedence over humanitarian considerations in the Palestine refugee question.

76. Some representatives were accusing Israel of attacking UNRWA personnel. That was not consistent with reality. Israel supported the mission of UNRWA and was working closely with it. Those who posed a threat to UNRWA personnel were the Palestinian terrorists who were in the refugee camps and who were using refugees as human shields and the camps as bases for terrorist acts. At the same time, the blame for the consequences of those actions rested with those who responded to those acts. Such a tactic encouraged others to commit similar actions. That waswhy it was necessary to assign the responsibility to the real perpetrators. The day before, yet another suicide terrorist had blown himself up in a shopping centre in Israel. He had been a resident of the Balata refugee camp. Two people died and more than 30 were injured as a result of the terrorist act. The speaker called upon the international community to condemn the criminal use of the refugee camps by the Palestinian terrorists.

77. Israel agreed that only a peaceful settlement could solve the problem. Israel was ready for negotiations and called upon the Palestinian side to abandon the hopeless campaign of terrorism and come to the negotiating table. Until the terrorists acts ended, Israel would have no choice but to take steps to protect the civilian population. Israel supported the humanitarian mandate of UNRWA and would cooperate with the Agency to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Terrorism posed a threat to the Agency's humanitarian mission, to the Israeli and Palestinian citizens, and to peace.

78. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was in complete agreement with the Israeli representative's statement that the Palestinian refugee question did not come out of nowhere. It was the result of the occupation. As for the statement that Arab States had refused to comply with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), he expressed doubt that Israel itself had agreed to do so. If it had, why then did Palestinians control less than 10 percent of the territory, and not 22 percent, as called for in the resolution, and why had Israel and Lebanon fought in the village of Malykya, which had originally been part of the land allocated to the Palestinians?

79. Returning to the question of why Arab States had not provided Palestine refugees living conditions consistent with international norms, he asked why Israel had not allowed the refugees to return in keeping with international norms. As for Israel's statement that it had not attacked UNRWA personnel, he cited in rebuttal the Commissioner-General's report, which had said that Israeli troops had employed weapons against Agency personnel, as a result of which one Agency staff member had died.

The meeting rose at 12:35 p.m.

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 11 November 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Maitland ..... (South Africa)

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Agenda item 77 : Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

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The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

Agenda item 77: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories *(continued)* (A/57/204, A/57/314-318, A/57/421)

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to documents in the Committee's possession pertaining to the item under consideration.

2. **Mr. Mahendran** (Sri Lanka), Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, introduced the Special Committee's report (A/57/207) and noted that it should be considered along with the periodic report (A/57/421), which contained a summary of articles that had appeared in the Israeli press.

3. He noted that the report had been prepared on the basis of testimonies of residents of the occupied territories and Israel with whom Special Committee members had met in Cairo and Amman, as well as on the basis of testimonies of witnesses who did not live in the occupied territories, but who maintained contact with residents of the Occupied Syrian Golan.

4. On behalf of the Special Committee, he expressed regret at the fact that he had not been able to visit the occupied territories to become acquainted with Israel's position on the matter.

5. According to the information obtained, the human rights situation in the occupied territory had deteriorated enormously since Israel's military incursions. Witnesses appearing before the Committee had provided detailed testimony and information referring to the tragic conditions under which Palestinian citizens had been living during the period under review. Their reports presented a grim picture and showed a disturbing deterioration in the humanitarian and economic situation, which was further aggravated by severe violations of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population.

6. The report focused primarily on issues of particular concern in the light of the testimonies and material received: the right to life; arrest and detention; use of military force against the civilian population; freedom of movement; freedom of the press and the media; humanitarian assistance; medical assistance; the economic impact, including destruction of infrastructure and property; and human rights defenders.

7. Over 1,300 Palestinians, including a good many children, had been killed and over 20,000 had been injured, the majority of them peaceful civilians, since September 2001. Also contributing to increased poverty and despair was collective punishment, such as prolonged sieges and blockades, the demolition of houses and the destruction of agricultural land, which had left Palestinians unable to go to their jobs in Israel, placed insurmountable obstacles before Palestinian exporters, led to increased unemployment, and prevented students from exercising their right to education and the wounded, the sick, and the disabled, their right to medical assistance. All that had negative implications for socio-economic and cultural life in the occupied territories and particularly undermined the already poorly developed Palestinian economy even more. A dramatic reduction in incomes was noted for a considerable portion of the population, with the delivery of medical and humanitarian assistance hampered.

8. The considerable and extensive controls themselves and the very severe manner in which such controls have been enforced by the Israeli authorities were, in the view of the Special Committee, totally inconsistent with human rights standards and obligations.

9. Throughout the years of occupation, Israeli authorities had put in place a comprehensive and elaborate system of laws and regulations and administrative measures that affected all aspects of the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in the occupied territories. The laws and regulations were so framed that they vested in officials a considerable degree of authority and latitude over the lives of the people of the occupied territories. Moreover, during periods of violence, such exercise of control made the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in the occupied territories even more unbearable.

10. Among the witnesses appearing before the Special Committee, there was a sense of hopelessness, frustration and anger directed not only against the

occupying Power, but also against the international community, including the Special Committee itself, in connection with its inability to provide relief to the hardship experienced by the people of the occupied territories. Unfortunately, the only conclusion that seemed possible from the statements made and the materials provided to the Special Committee was that the human rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories were being harshly ignored.

11. The Special Committee's report served as a reminder that the failure to resolve the fundamental problem of the occupation, combined with the failure of successive governments of Israel to comply with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention) and norms of international humanitarian law, had placed the population of the occupied territories in a vulnerable position, left it unprotected, and made it the target of wide-ranging violations. Given that the Special Committee's report was incomplete and did not include the views of the Israelis, who themselves were also victims of violence and some of whose people had also been killed or injured, the Committee wanted to emphasize that it had not had access to the occupied territories, despite the requests it made for such access every year, the last such request made in the current year. Had the Committee received such access, it could have become acquainted with the views of the representatives of the Israeli authorities on what had caused them to take the measures mentioned in the reports that came to the Committee. With such access, the Committee's reports would have been more complete.

12. **Ms. Abdelhady Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) noted that the occupying Power, Israel, continued to trample the rights of the Palestinian people to the present day. For that reason, the agenda item under debate was of crucial importance to the Palestinian delegation, as it should be for the international community as well. The Special Committee's work remained an important component of the efforts of the international community.

13. The source of all the violations committed by Israel was the occupation, which had continued for more than 35 years and was itself a violation of international law. Over that time, suffering had not diminished; rather, human rights had been violated ever more zealously and aggressively. The occupying Power had been waging a brutal military campaign for two years already, setting weapons and military hardware against the Palestinian people and its leadership. In March 2002, population centres and refugee camps throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory were re-occupied or attacked, which had also affected Palestinian Authority structures. Feeding the cycle of violence relentlessly, Israel guaranteed that death, destruction of property, confiscation of land, and exploitation of resources would continue, and, as before, there would be no normalization of life among the Palestinians.

14. It was hard to stand by idly in the face of the outrages perpetrated by Israel on the Palestinian people. Before one's eyes were the images of babies being buried, maimed youths, mothers crying in the wreckage of their homes, fathers trying to somehow feed their families, and the elderly suffering the loss of property and shelter, as they had so many times before. Since 28 September 2000, almost 2,000 Palestinians had perished at the hands of the occupying forces - both as a result of military operations and as a result of willful killing and extrajudicial executions. Many Palestinians had also been killed or injured by Israeli settlers, who continued to act with impunity. It should also be mentioned that many Palestinians, including children, had died when they were denied access to hospitals or proper medical assistance. Some 35,000 Palestinians had been crippled (some for life); mental and emotional disorders were widespread.

15. Over the past year, Israeli occupation forces had intensified the practice of raids. During those raids, hundreds of Palestinians had been abducted by the occupiers, and thousands of others had been abused and detained. Those abducted and detained were victims of harassment and even torture. Thousands of Palestinians continued to be tortured today in Israeli prisons or detention facilities.

16. At the same time, the occupation forces were devastating the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Thousands of Palestinians were without shelter: their homes had been razed by bulldozers. In some cases, as the Special Committee reported, people were unable to leave the dwelling being razed and were buried alive. Historical, cultural, and religious facilities had been damaged, as had buildings of Palestinian ministries, hospitals, and schools. Many homes and public institutions, including Palestinian Authority facilities, had been ransacked by the occupation forces. Utilities

had been damaged many times. Farmland and crops had been devastated. Palestinian *fellahs* had been harassed and robbed.

17. It was widely known that Israel continued to pursue its illegal settlement activities throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as in the Occupied Syrian Golan. That was accompanied by the confiscation of land and property, the exploitation and looting of natural resources, and the influx of an even larger number of settlers.

18. The Special Committee's reports detailed the severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods, including humanitarian and medical personnel and assistance. The military siege had essentially resulted in the Palestinian people being locked in their own land. Peaceful Palestinians had often been killed or injured during the curfews. The life of Palestinian society had virtually collapsed, a fact reported by various United Nations offices and by humanitarian institutions. Moreover, Israeli officials, including the prime minister and chief of staff, admitted that Israel pursued a deliberate policy to that end.

19. She could not help but also mention the attack by Israeli occupation forces on the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002. The occupiers had entered the camp with the clear intention of destroying and killing. More than 50 Palestinians died, including women, children, and elderly, some of them simply bleeding to death. The occupation forces kept humanitarian organizations from entering the camp for more than 11 days.

20. In summarizing, she felt it necessary to say that the Israeli occupation forces had committed not only violations of international humanitarian law, but also war crimes in the Jenin camp, as well as in other areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community must ultimately bring the perpetrators of those crimes to account.

21. She said it was necessary to reaffirm the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to all the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem. Israel must recognize that and comply fully with its provisions. On 5 December 2001, the Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted a declaration in which the parties recognized the applicability of the Convention, called upon the occupying Power to refrain from violations of the Convention, including the breaches enumerated in article 147 of the Convention, and reaffirmed their obligations under articles 146-148. She hoped that the parties to the Convention would actually make the requisite efforts to ensure compliance with the Convention.

22. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the tragic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, would change soon. For that to happen, of course, Israel would have to cease all violations of international law, beginning with the immediate cessation of its military campaign against the Palestinian people. In that connection, the role of the international community, one of whose components consisted of the efforts of the United Nations, could not be underestimated. She hoped that all the resolutions on the item under consideration would receive their well-deserved support.

23. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) emphasized the continuing importance of the work of the Special Committee, which represented the international community in its efforts to identify Israeli crimes in the occupied Arab territories. Any attempt to weaken that role amounted to providing Israel cover for continuing to violate the legitimate rights of the Arab population of those territories. It was not surprising that Israel had refused to cooperate with the Special Committee since the Committee's establishment, given that the Committee's very job was to expose Israel's illegal activities and terrorism.

24. Since 1967, in violation of all international instruments, Israel had been Judaizing the Golan, not hesitating to seize water sources or destroy agricultural resources belonging to local Arabs. After seizing around 96 percent of the land in the Golan, Israel continued to plan new settlements and expand existing settlements. Half a million Syrian refugees evicted by Israel in 1967 were still awaiting return to their homeland. But the number of Israeli settlements in the Golan, which already numbered 40, was growing. And that was happening at a time when, generally speaking, peace moves based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories were supposed to be taking place.

25. Near population centres, Israel was planting mines, which had already killed 85 people. Israel was impeding Syrian building developments by imposing exorbitant taxes and restrictions on construction. People were being arrested, there was a shortage of medical assistance, and Syrians were being kept from

celebrating their national holidays. Israel was shamelessly destroying the natural environment. Dozens of Syrians were languishing in Israeli prisons, where they were being subjected to various forms of harassment and humiliation.

26. Israeli television had carried a report on Israeli activities aimed at colonizing the Syrian Golan. Construction of more than 1,000 housing units had gotten under way there - the largest campaign thus far to expand settlements in the Golan. It had even been given a name - the Golan Dreams. Meanwhile, the Israeli leaders should be aware that the occupation and oppression could not continue and that the Golan was part and parcel of the Syrian Arab Republic and would return to the fold despite force of arms.

27. The world had witnessed new atrocities against the defenseless Palestinian population over the past year. The occupation forces committed a whole series of criminal acts in which around 1,900 Palestinians died. The injured numbered in the thousands. A recently published Amnesty International report called the Israeli actions accompanying the re-occupation of the West Bank and the incursion into Jenin and Nablus war crimes. The international community could not close its eyes to those crimes. If such Israeli actions continued, they would pose a real threat to international peace and security. Peace could not live alongside occupation or demonstrations of force.

28. After the Second World War, the Middle East became an arena of destruction and conflict. The source of that destruction and conflict was the Israeli approach, based on occupation, colonization, and expulsion of native inhabitants. The United Nations had adopted hundreds of resolutions, and Israel had openly ignored them, re-occupying the Golan, the West Bank, Gaza, and a portion of Lebanese territory. When the Arab States put forth their own peace initiative in March 2002, Israel's response was to invade cities and Palestinian camps. The road to peace in the Middle East was through observance of the international rule of law, and the means for achieving that peace were, specifically, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the land for peace principle. The requisite pressure must be exerted on the Israeli Government, and there must be no room for a selective approach or double standards there.

29. **Mr. Abu Zeid** (Egypt) said that the past year had been one of daily suffering for the Palestinian people, who had been subjected to numerous violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and that had been reflected in the reports introduced in the Fourth Committee on the humanitarian, political, and economic situation in the occupied territories. All those reports contained information on the inhumane Israeli practices carried out under the pretext of maintaining security and fighting terrorism. The A/57/207 report before the Committee made particular note of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and proved unequivocally that Israel was violating inalienable rights of the Palestinian people such as the right to life.

30. He said that the international community could not remain indifferent to the report's contents regarding the detentions and arrests and the use of armed force against the civilian population, as well as regarding the restriction of freedom of movement and the destruction of infrastructure and property. Citing the report on the observance human rights before the Third Committee the past week, he said that the violations seen in the occupied territories were the direct consequence of the Israeli military occupation. Only when the occupation ended could the human rights situation be redressed. He noted that the situation with the population of the occupied Palestinian territories differed little from the situation with the Syrian population in the occupied Golan.

31. He said that the legal and administrative measures adopted by the authorities of the occupying Power were a daily encroachment on the identity and culture of the Syrian people, which was a flagrant violation of the norms of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Government of Israel also continued to violate Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The current deterioration of the situation bespoke the need for a global solution. The consensus reached on the creation and co-existence of two independent States should be taken into account.

32. He further emphasized that the development of complex initiatives should take into account, first, that such initiatives should not only pursue a goal of settling political and economic questions and questions of security, but should also indicates ways to achieve a solid solution of the problem of declaring a Palestinian State on a specific timetable; second, that any such initiatives must allow for the fact that the situation within the Palestinian territories was purely a Palestinian matter, and interference with it was not permissible under any pretext; and third, that Israeli

troops must withdraw immediately from Palestinian cities and that, in accord with the Secretary General's proposal, international observers must be sent to the territories to protect the population and prevent a resurgence of violence.

33. The rapid pace of events in the Middle East was causing deepening despair. He hoped that certain processes within Israeli society would prompt the authorities to review their practices with regard to the Palestinian people. It was high time to recognize that there was no more reliable guarantee of an improvement of the situation in the region and throughout the world than to abandon violence, solve problems peacefully, and respect human rights.

34. **Mr. Djacta** (Algeria) said that the Special Committee was the only forum in which the international community could expose the crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Arab territories. Israel continued to violate relevant international obligations and accords and show disrespect for the United Nations.

35. Israel's policy of fait accompli was geared to isolating the Arab territories and Judaizing their population for purposes of altering the demographic picture of the region. The Israeli authorities continued to apply collective sanctions and destroy the economic infrastructure of Palestine.

36. The massacres carried out by the Israeli occupation forces in the Jenin refugee camp were war crimes. Israel was merely pretending to want negotiations, but in fact wanted to strip the Palestinian Authority of the ability to conduct such negotiations. Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan were no less dangerous. Israel's behavior posed a threat to the security of the entire region. The Government of Israel was a government of terrorism and war, not a government of peace. Algeria strongly condemned Israel's position, which was leading to the destruction of the peace process. The international community must hold Israel fully responsible for the consequences of its hostile actions.

37. **Mr. An-Najar** (Yemen) said that the United Nations and the General Assembly, which express the will of the international community, could not be neutral parties and must provide support to the Palestinian people living under the Israeli occupation. The rights of the Palestinian people had been denied for more than 50 years now.

38. The United Nations was doing less than was expected of it. It was merely adopting resolutions that, all in all, made special note of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to self-determination and an end to the occupation. Over a span of 30 years, the Security Council had adopted 29 resolutions on Israeli practices and actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, but Israel refused to comply with them. Dozens of other resolutions had been adopted on the occupied Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, Israel's violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the settlements, the dispatch of fact-finding teams, etc., but Israel complied with only the points of the resolutions that were beneficial to it.

39. As for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, plans and draft resolutions were being introduced that indicated that the Palestinian people were still not ready to live in a democracy, and that was why Israel was not recognizing free elections and was attempting to impose its own electoral and political system. Such an approach would in no way resolve the essential problem, which consisted in ending the Israeli occupation.

40. Being a peace-loving State, Yemen strongly supported the peace efforts whose basis consisted of respect for all laws and the Arab peace initiative (A/56/1026-S/2002/932) that had been adopted at the Beirut Summit. He again emphasized the right of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples to a just struggle for the return of their lands and to live in peace in their homelands.

41. **Mr. Hassan** (Jordan) said that his Government expressed regret at the unceasing illegal and reprehensible practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, which continued to inflict pain and suffering on the Palestinian people. Israel continued to violate the most fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, as well as its own obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

42. It was no news that Israel continued to target the civilian population, maintained round-the-clock curfews in the West Bank, held detainees with no legal basis whatsoever, committed wanton murders and made arrests, deliberately destroyed the homes of Palestinians, and uprooted their trees and destroyed their property. Furthermore, Israel continued to hinder unrestricted provision of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people at a time when they were in

particular need of it. The adverse economic conditions of the Palestinian people had caused a genuine humanitarian crisis. The results of the Israeli practices were loss of access to sources of employment and income, as well as to essential goods and services.

43. The Government of Jordan called on Israel to refrain from employing such regrettable measures and to take part in a real and genuine process of providing assistance for rebuilding the Palestinian Authority so that it could fulfil its basic obligations and provide the needed basic services to the Palestinian people.

44. Israeli practices had not only disrupted the operation of the Palestinian Authority and brought suffering to the Palestinian people, but had also expanded the opportunities for the fundamentalist and extremist organizations operating in the region. The popularity of those organizations was growing not only because they were conducting terrorist attacks against Israel, but also, more important, because they were providing humanitarian services on the ground, i.e., services that the Palestinian Authority could no longer provide, because Israel had decided to pursue its policy of eliminating the Authority. The Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories provided fertile ground for the emergence of extremism on both sides.

45. Jordan recognized the right of each country to fight terrorism and to eliminate that threat, and it had repeatedly condemned the murder of civilians - be they Israeli or Palestinian.

46. Jordan believed that international diplomatic efforts that reflected the work of the Quartet to develop a clear plan of action and the setting of a specific timetable for ending the conflict in the Middle East, as well as the creation of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders in keeping with the vision of the president of the United States, were the key elements to the achievement of peace and stability in the region. The plan of action must be comprehensive, must be considered a single package, and must involve international guarantees for its implementation.

47. He emphasized the importance of the Arab peace initiative that had been adopted at the Beirut Summit. It was a powerful initiative that took into account the needs of all Israeli citizens. For the first time since the current conflict had started, the whole Arab world was promising Israel collective security measures, entry into a collective peace treaty, establishment of normal relations, and the achievement of an agreed-upon solution to the refugee problem and an end to the conflict.

48. The Government of Jordan appreciated the efforts of the Palestinian Authority to conduct new, extremely needed reforms. Conditions should be created to ensure that the reform process would be successful, and Israel should respond to that positive development.

49. All the measures that Israel had taken to introduce its laws and jurisdiction in the holy city of Jerusalem were illegal and had no legal force, and they violated Security Council resolutions. As for the Israeli settlements, the Government of Jordan stressed again that those settlements were not only illegal under international law, but also created serious obstacles to peace.

50. The Government of Jordan declared again that Israel must comply with all the Security Council resolutions relevant to the occupied Palestinian territories and the Palestinian people. Confidence in the Security Council depended on its ability to ensure compliance with its resolutions, which were binding on all States Members.

51. The Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Golan also violated international law. Jordan called on Israel to refrain from measures that entail, specifically, the expansion of construction of the illegal settlements and the imposition of harsh economic restrictions on the Syrian population in the region.

52. Peace in the Middle East would not be comprehensive without the participation of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. Negotiations needed to be resumed on those matters to reach an agreement ensuring the return of the occupied Syrian Golan and all Lebanese territories. A comprehensive peace must also result in the settlement of all aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, namely, the borders, Jerusalem, self-determination, the refugees, mutual security, the economic community, and the freedom of movement of people, financial resources, and goods.

53. **Mr. Hasmy** (Malaysia) expressed regret that, in disregard of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 56/59 of 10 December 2001, the Government of Israel refused to cooperate with the Special Committee, depriving it of the opportunity to make an independent assessment of the situation in the occupied territories. Nevertheless, Israel's unconstructive position notwithstanding, the

Committee had managed to obtain the views of a number Israeli citizens from human rights organizations who shared their thoughts on the plight of the Palestinians living under occupation and informed the Committee of the efforts of their organizations to provide assistance to Palestinians in the occupied territories.

54. Much of the report's information on Israel's repressive measures affecting all aspects of the Palestinians' lives was corroborated by reports from other independent sources, such as the Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International, and other human rights groups, some of whom had had an opportunity to visit the occupied territories. The Malaysian delegation was particularly disturbed by the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the suffering caused to children by the military actions in the Palestinian territories.

55. An extremely grave situation had developed in East Jerusalem, which Israel continued to Judaize relentlessly through the systematic confiscation of Arab lands, the demolition of Arab homes out of security considerations or for administrative reasons or the revocation of residence permits. As a result of so-called natural expansion of previously established settlements, the Jewish population of East Jerusalem had exceeded 180,000.

56. At the same time, a systematic campaign continued to demonize and isolate the Palestinian leadership, specifically Yasser Arafat. With its actions, Israel was trying to weaken the Palestinians in the hope that they would be rendered completely powerless in future negotiations with Israel.

57. The international community must not be selective in matters of protecting human rights, because employing a double standard would only undermine confidence in the United Nations. The Malaysian delegation could not accept the argument that, because of the special nature of Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli relations, the international community should ignore flagrant violations of the human rights of Palestinians and the Syrians living in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Malaysian delegation believed that the Special Committee's mandate should continue until it was no longer needed.

58. **Mr. Mekel** (Israel) said that the position of the Israeli Government with regard to the Special Committee had not changed over the more than three decades of the Committee's existence. Since the Committee's establishment, it had been used as a tool for hostile propaganda against Israel. It was financed with limited United Nations resources, which neither helped to advance the cause of peace between the parties nor contributed to an improvement of the situation of the Palestinian people.

59. The root of the Special Committee's bias was in its very name. Blame was assigned to Israel even before any evidence had been examined. Most shocking of all was that the Committee's failure to consider the impact of Palestinian terrorism not only on Israelis, but also on the Palestinians themselves. The Committee's report failed to acknowledge the incredible dilemma facing Israel in fighting terrorists who hid themselves among the civilian population. Nor did the report consider the effects of the Palestinian terrorist campaign on the human rights of the Israeli population, more than 600 of whom had been killed. The day before, five more Israeli civilians had been killed in one of the kibbutzim. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which reported directly to Arafat, claimed responsibility for the crime. It was certainly regrettable that none of the preceding speakers thought it necessary to express any condolences to Israel over that.

60. Israel had taken great care to ensure that its actions aimed at uprooting the infrastructure of terrorism in the Palestinian territories were as precise and exact as possible, so as to minimize the harm done to the civilian population. The difficulties endured by the Palestinians were primarily the consequence of the terrorist activity that was being aggressively pursued in their midst. The Special Committee, however, deliberately ignored that.

61. That was why the Special Committee's work accomplished nothing at best and was counterproductive at worst. In that regard, it was no different from a multitude of other United Nations agencies created exclusively to advance the interests of the Palestinian side. It was entirely reasonable to ask why such a disproportionate amount of time was being devoted to consideration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as if there were no other conflicts in the world that produced a considerably greater number of casualties. Israel believed that the work of those agencies only diminished the will of both parties to carry out their obligations to conduct negotiations to achieve an enduring settlement.

62. Israel had nothing against the esteemed members of the Special Committee. The problem was in the Committee's mandate. Because of that, Israel saw no point in discussing the contents of the report. At the same time, in the interests of peace in the Middle East, it would be useful to address a few historical facts that the report so deliberately ignored.

63. The causes of the conflict in the Middle East - and the situation of the Palestinian population was only one aspect of that conflict - lay in the strident rejection by the Palestinians and the Arab States of General Assembly resolution 18 (II) of 29 November 1947, their refusal to recognize the right of Israel to exist, and the aggressive wars that had been waged to that end. One such war was the 1967 war, launched by Arab States to destroy the State of Israel. The Israeli presence in the West Bank, in the Gaza Strip, and in the Golan Heights was, therefore, a result not of Israeli aggression, but of measures Israel took to defend itself.

64. In subsequent years, Israel persistently tried to reach peace agreements with its neighbors. Those efforts were successful in some cases - specifically, peace agreements were reached with Egypt and Jordan - but not in others. Unfortunately, no leaders have emerged among the Palestinians or in the Syrian Arab Republic or Lebanon who would be genuinely prepared to admit that the only solution was to look for a way to live together in peace and security. Those now in power were inciting terrorism and violence and were not prepared to publicly declare that terrorism was not only immoral and illegal, but also ultimately futile. Peace in the Middle East would be achievable when leaders emerged who were willing to speak frankly with their people and participate in talks that were free of violence and the threat of violence.

65. Israel, for its part, was eager to engage in talks on any outstanding issue between the parties without any preconditions. That was the only way to achieve a lasting settlement for the good of all peoples of the region. The day would come when talks would replace terrorism and dialogue would replace enmity, although the one-sided interpretation of the situation in the region that assigned the blame for the conflict to just one party - and that under the aegis of the United Nations - would not bring the day nearer. Based on that, Israel called on the delegation to vote against the Special Committee's report and the resolutions associated with it.

66. Mr. Al-Malki (Qatar), emphasizing the importance of the Special Committee's work, noted the valuable and objective information in the report on Israel's continuing violations of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories. Israel's refusal to cooperate with the Special Committee was not surprising, given that the Committee's job was to expose Israel's practices and its flagrant violations of international law and humanitarian norms. For more than two years already, the world had witnessed a barbarous campaign unleashed by Israeli forces against the defenseless Palestinian people, the casualties in that campaign being primarily women and children. Employing an entire arsenal of heavy weaponry, Israel used excessive force indiscriminately, as a result of which hundreds of peaceful, innocent residents had died.

67. The international community must take urgent measures to ensure compliance with the norms of international law that continued to be flagrantly violated by the occupation forces, who refused to recognize relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Immediate action needed to be taken to put an end to the practices of the occupation forces, which were tantamount to war crimes and included the murder of defenseless civilians and the destruction of property. Israeli occupation forces were hindering the movements of Palestinians, many of whom were cut off from food sources and medical assistance as a result. Unemployment had grown among Palestinians, who, subjected to what was essentially collective punishment, could not reach their jobs because of closures. The practices of administrative detention, harassment, and even torture continued.

68. The Special Committee's report confirmed that the extremely alarming human rights situation and economic conditions in the occupied territories continue to deteriorate. Israel, the occupying Power, continued to violate international law and humanitarian norms. The practice of creating illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied territories continued. Attempts were being made to change the legal status of Jerusalem and its demographic make-up, essentially in pursuit of the goal of the Judaization of the city. A just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question could be secured only if the occupation were ended, the Jewish settlements were dismantled, and the

Palestinians were given the opportunity to exercise their right to sovereignty and to the creation of an independent State with its capital in Jerusalem. Peace in the Middle East was possible only on the basis of a comprehensive settlement that included, specifically, an end to the occupation of the Syrian Golan under Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In that connection, the Special Committee's work was exceptionally important.

69. **Ms. Løj** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe - Bulgaria, Estonia Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic - and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey, as well as Iceland, which was part of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), said that, for all the tragedy of the events of the past year, the dramatic deterioration of the situation, and the unceasing violence both in Israel and the occupied territories, accompanied by an alarmingly high number of casualties among the civilian population and the continuing violations of fundamental human rights norms and international humanitarian law, there was a glimmer of hope in the Middle East. That was due to the efforts of the international community, including not least the Quartet, to restart political talks.

70. The European Union strongly condemned the attacks on the innocent civilians of both sides, including the terrorist attack the day before at one of the Israeli kibbutzim. The European Union acknowledged the right of Israel to live in security and protect itself against terrorism. That did not, however, give Israel carte blanche, exempting it from its obligations under international law. There was no justification for the use of the excessive force resulting in serious violations of human rights and international law, and the European Union was gravely concerned over the fact that Israel was performing extrajudicial executions, arbitrarily detaining and deporting Palestinians, and demolishing homes and infrastructure and that its armed forces were attacking civilian areas indiscriminately. Israel must cease such practices immediately.

71. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, must do everything possible to fight terrorism, prevent terrorist attacks, and dismantle terrorist networks, employing all legitimate means at its disposal. The Palestinians must prosecute terrorists, categorically denounce terrorism, and stop its incitement, while continuing the efforts to reform the Palestinian Authority at the same time, with an eye to strengthening good governance, transparency, and devolution of power.

72. The economic, social, and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated badly, and emergency measures were needed to improve it. The European Union was gravely concerned over the intensified Israeli occupation activities and the harsh restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods and called upon Israel to end the blockade of the occupied territories and comply with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1435 (2002). Israel must also provide the Palestinian population of the occupied territories access to all basic social services, above all to food and medical assistance.

73. The European Union again called upon Israel to also provide international and humanitarian personnel full, free, and unfettered access to the occupied territories in keeping with the requirements of international humanitarian law. Israel must also give the Palestinian side withheld taxes amounting to around US$ 600,000.

74. Given the continuing expansion of illegal settlements, the European Union urged Israel to reverse its settlement policy in the occupied territories. Israel must also immediately halt illegal, unilateral actions that prejudiced a final settlement of the conflict and changed the physical and demographic make-up of the occupied territories.

75. There could be no military solution of the conflict. And the European Union remained willing to work closely with the Quartet and all interested parties to continue to assist efforts aimed at achieving a final settlement of the Middle East conflict and at using the settlement to implement a vision of the region in which the two States, Israel and Palestine, would live side by side within secure and recognized borders.

76. **Ms. Costa** (United States) said that the resolutions under the agenda item under consideration focused on Israeli actions without regard for the context in which they were undertaken, and they also ignored the question of the accountability of the Palestinian side for its role in perpetuating the current conflict, which had claimed so many lives on both sides.

77. Keenly aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people, the United States nevertheless did not see how supporting resolutions so detached from reality could alleviate that suffering or contribute to finding a solution. For that reason, the United States could not support the resolutions and urged the States Members to refrain from supporting the standard appeal made to the Special Committee year after year to continue its work.

78. The resolutions that provided the mandate for the Special Committee did not take into account the human rights violations committed by the Palestinian Authority or the terrorist acts committed by Palestinian militant groups. Those groups supported and encouraged terrorist attacks that resulted in the deaths of peaceful Israelis. The scale and systematic nature of the attacks clearly put them in the category of crimes against humanity. The United States condemned the attack made on the Israeli kibbutz the day before.

79. At the same time, to its credit, the Special Committee acknowledged in paragraph 43 of its report (A/57/207) that the Israeli "raids began shortly after the assassination of [the] then Israeli Tourism Minister". It must be ensured that international norms of humanitarian law be observed by all parties in the conflict and that all parties be accountable for what had happened. It was also necessary that, in the future, proper rules be put in place that would make it possible to prevent violations of the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.

80. The United States policy on the settlements had long been known. Israeli settlement activity, which undermined the trust of the Palestinian side and essentially prejudiced the outcome of negotiations, negated the chances for real peace and security, and the United States believed that such activities should be ended.

81. She said that, as a delegate representing the public of her country, she was surprised at the delegates of some States constantly trying to find justification in terrorist acts in their remarks. Such pronouncements were reprehensible, because they merely encouraged activities that were unacceptable under any circumstance.

82. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that the efforts of the international community, including measures implemented by the United Nations, had been unproductive because of the lack of cooperation on the part of Israeli authorities and the refusal to comply with Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

83. The Security Council's impotence was mainly due to the use of double standards and the threat by one of its permanent members to veto any draft resolution that sought a genuine settlement of the conflict.

84. The confrontation between Israeli forces and the Palestinian population had intensified in the past year, as a result of which the number of deaths and injuries among Palestinian and Israeli civilians had increased, with the Palestinians suffering to a considerably greater extent; that had devastating consequences for Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The border closures and the prohibition against Palestinians entering the areas and territories where they worked limited access to sources of livelihood for tens of thousands of families.

85. The Cuban delegation had declared more than once that the inability to take effective measures would result in an intensification of the violence on the part of those in Israel who were against a peaceful and just settlement of the Middle East conflict. The most advanced military hardware for waging conventional warfare was being used against the Palestinian people. An unequal struggle was under way between a well-armed army and a civilian population that was standing up for its inherent right to an independent State. That indicated a gross and massive violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, beginning with their right to life.

86. Apart from those rights, also being violated were principles of international law, international humanitarian law, and the Charter of the United Nations. The provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on its applicability to the Arab territories were being breached.

87. The Israeli Government had not allowed the Special Committee in the occupied Arab territories since 1968. The Cuban delegation expressed its regret at the fact that Israeli authorities were not cooperating with a Committee established by the General Assembly.

88. The Cuban delegation shared the wish of the international community for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The achievement of such a peace was

inseparably linked to a final solution of the Palestinian problem, which was the cornerstone of the Middle East conflict. The achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East was impossible as long as obstacles were placed in the path of the effective and full exercise of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian and Arab peoples in all the occupied territories. Cuba once again declared its full support of the inherent right of the Palestinian people to an independent, sovereign State with a capital in East Jerusalem. It demanded the unconditional return of all Israeli-occupied Arab territories and again declared the illegality of all Israeli settlements on Arab territories occupied since 1967.

89. **Mr. Medjoub** (Tunisia), referring to the statement of the Special Committee's chairman, who had noted the serious humanitarian, legal, and political consequences of Israeli practices, said that the current debate of the Israeli actions was taking place against the backdrop of tragic events in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the Middle East as a whole. According to the testimonies obtained, Israeli measures such as the arrests of Palestinians, the humiliation of official representatives, the demolition of homes and offices, the continuing human rights violations, and the expansion taking place in Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan in order to reverse the demographics in the region were producing a sense of despair among the Palestinian population.

90. Such Israeli practices were a flagrant violation of the norms of international law. The Tunisian delegation again called upon Israel to abandon the aggressive measures against the people living under occupation and invited Israel to make every effort to normalize the situation and create conditions favorable to negotiations. The international community must rid that region of war and destruction and help to create an independent Palestinian State.

91. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) noted that the Special Committee continued to prepare valuable reports that shed light on the human rights situation in the occupied territories, despite its lack of access to the occupied territories. For example, more than 1,300 Palestinians had died and more than 20,000 had been injured in the period under review. An enormous amount of property damage had been done. Thousands of people had been left without shelter; in the Jenin camp alone, one third of the homes had been destroyed. According to the testimony of former detainees, people were treated badly in the detention centres, and they were subjected to harsh interrogations. Palestinians were taken hostage and were used as "human shields".

92. The reports spoke of the obstacles that Israel was placing before human rights defenders and journalists. They also spoke of the most varied of restrictions placed on freedom of movement, of disrespect for medical personnel, and of the hardships that the sick and the injured had to endure. Finally, they told of the enormous effect that the past year's events had had on the economic situation of the occupied territories.

93. The contents of the reports continued to deeply concern the Indonesian delegation. It is aggrieved at Israel's persistent contempt for the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs. Israel's disregard for United Nations resolutions must be ended.

94. **Mr. Siddiqui** (Pakistan) said that the Fourth Geneva Convention was applicable to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, as well as to the populations of those territories. The Security Council in its resolutions and the International Committee of the Red Cross had acknowledged that. The Convention established the obligations of occupying Powers with regard to "protected persons", prohibiting practices such as willful killing, inhumane treatment, and deportation. It also prohibited the occupying Power from moving a portion of its population into the occupied territories and stated as well: "No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited". Despite that, the "occupying Power" in this case was grossly violating all the rights of the population of Palestine and the Golan Heights under international law.

95. Citing numerous specific human rights violations committed by Israel against the Palestinians, he said that Israel was firmly obligated to respect and protect all human rights in keeping with the treaties it had signed. Drawing a parallel between the situation in the Middle East and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the "occupying Powers" in both cases were not fulfilling their legal obligations. He said that the norms of international law should be applied without discrimination or conditions, especially when the lives of innocent people are threatened by a heavy-handed state policy.

96. He called on the Fourth Committee to request the Security Council to take effective measures to ensure

that Israel fulfilled its legal obligations, specifically, to give the United Nations the opportunity to conduct unhindered monitoring of the situation in the occupied territories. He also believed that the Committee should call upon the States Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to convene a regular meeting on the question of the creation of a mechanism to ensure good-faith and consistent compliance with the Convention by occupying Powers. Noting again the similarity between Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir, he said that attempts to bring about justice were not yet successful in the two most unstable regions of the world - the Middle East and South Asia - despite the appeals of the international community, and that was hampering efforts to bring about a lasting peace.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.